

The Impact of Ambient Temperature on Consumer Food Choice

Authors : Yining Yu, Miaolei Jia, Bingjie Li

Abstract : While researchers have begun to investigate how ambient elements affect consumers' choices between healthy and unhealthy food, the role of ambient temperature is relatively unknown. In this study, we find that ambient coldness increases consumers' preference for unhealthy food. This effect is driven by the increased need for energy automatically activated in a cold ambiance. Consequently, consumers are more inclined to choose calorie-rich unhealthy food. This effect is diminished when the unhealthy food is cold because cold dish cannot provide the energy consumers need in the cold ambiance. We conclude with a discussion of our theoretical contributions to the literature of temperature effects and food consumption. We also offer practical takeaways for restaurant managers.

Keywords : ambient temperature, cold ambiance, food choice, need for energy

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